



Labor and Public Employees Committee

HB 5356 An Act Concerning Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Kushner, Chairwoman Porter, ranking members, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Bryan DiDonato and I am Juvenile Detention Officer at the Hartford Juvenile Detention Center. I am a member of AFSCME Council 4, Local 749.

I am here today to testify in favor of House Bill 5356, *An Act Concerning Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers*. House bill 5356 would provide a payment of \$2000 for full time workers and \$1000 for part time workers who were essential and, on the frontlines, like myself, during the pandemic.

In 2020, I was deemed an essential worker. I had no choice but to work, each and every day during the pandemic crisis. As a Detention Officer, there is never a time when the center is shut down, closed or put on hold. I worked straight shifts, always moving, always an integral part of the clockwork. At multiple times during the pandemic, we had at least sixty to seventy percent of our working brothers and sisters who were either sick or tested positive each week. On top of that the kids were getting sicker and sicker and needed to quarantine in the center.

I had no choice but to make sure I took care of the kids who were sick. The Juveniles were housed in 8 x 12 rooms. I had to check on them hourly, each day. I had to make sure they were eating, getting fresh air, taking showers, and most of all not harming themselves. Even though I was covered in PPE gear, head to toe, I was breathing in the recycled air. I was exposing myself to Covid each and every day. This also meant I was subjecting my family, friends, and anyone I worked with to what I was exposed to. I was a direct caregiver for many many months. I was risking my life to make sure others were safe and supervised. I put my life in danger every day during the pandemic.

I urge you to pass HB 5356, which would give an essential worker who worked during the pandemic, compensation and honor the work that we did. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

